

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6163
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
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AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
CINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 370

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: RECENT POLITICAL PARTY ACTIVITY

1. HONDURAN POLITICAL ACTIVITY HAS INCREASED RECENTLY AS THE PARTIES SEEK TO MAINTAIN SOME RAPPORT WITH THEIR FOLLOWERS AND A DEGREE OF ORGANIZED COHESION. THE NATIONALIST PARTY INTENDS TO HOLD A NATIONAL CONVENTION IN TEGUCIGALPA ON FEBRUARY 1-5. THE MAJOR OBJECTIVE WILL BE TO ELECT A NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND TO MAKE A PUBLIC DECLARATION CONCERNING ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE PRESENT DE FACTO REGIME. THE LAST EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION WAS CONVOKED DURING MID-1972 TO CONSIDER THE WORKINGS OF THE UNITY GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT CRUZ AND WAS NOT CLOSED BUT ONLY SUSPENDED AT THAT TIME. THEREFORE, THE EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE SINCE THEN AND HAS HELD VARIOUS MEETINGS; RICARDO ZUNIGA AUGUSTINUS, LONG TIME PARTY STRONGMAN, WAS ELECTED COORDINATOR GENERAL IN ONE OF ITS SESSIONS.

2. MAX VELASQUEZ DIAZ RETURNED TO THE PRESIDENCY OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE LIBERAL PARTY TO PREPARE
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FOR ITS EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION ON APRIL 1. THE SESSIONS'S

MAJOR BUSINESS WILL BE TO CONSIDER AND APPROVE A NEW SET OF PARTY ORGANIZATIONAL STATUTES. SUBSEQUENTLY, AN ORDINARY SESSION WILL BE CONVOKED TO ELECT NEW MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND POLITICAL COMMISSION. VALASQUEZ HAD RESIGNED FROM THE PRESIDENCY IN AUGUST, 1972 BECAUSE HE WANTED TO HOLD AN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION TO REVIEW THE STATUTES IN LATE 1972 BUT THE MAJORITY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS DID NOT APPROVE. HE AGREED TO RETURN TO THE PRESIDENCY TO PRESIDE OVER THE APRIL 1 MEETING.

3. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAS FORBIDDEN THE PARTIES TO HOLD MASS DEMONSTRATIONS, THEY HAVE BEEN CARRYING ON INTERNAL PARTY ELECTIONS AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL IN PREPARATION FOR THEIR NATIONAL CONVENTIONS. THE GOVERNMENT IS CONFIDENT OF ITS POSITION OF POWER AND ALLOWS THE PARTIES TO CONTINUE THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL EXISTENCE AS LONG AS THEY DO NOT APPEAR TO THREATEN THE POLICIES OR POWER OF THE REGIME. IN TERMS OF THE NATIONALIST PARTY, THE MAJOR POINT AT ISSUE WILL BE WHETHER ZUNIGA IS WILLING TO MAKE THE REFORMS IN THE PARTY STRUCTURE AND DOCTRINE THAT WILL SATISFY THE GROUP CALLING FOR THE PARTY'S REORGANIZATION. ON THE LIBERAL SIDE, THEIR CONVENTION WILL SHOW THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE "DEMOCRATIC LEFT" HEADED BY CARLOS ROBERTO REINA AS COMPARED TO THE FORCES LED BY MODESTO RODAS ALVARADO. IN BOTH CASES, THE CONVENTIONS WILL SET THE POLICIES AND TONE FOR THE PARTIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LOPEZ REGIME FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT YEAR. SANCHEZ

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